

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 1

Output Group: 1.1 – Funding for schools

DEST Question No. E843_05

Senator Carr provided in writing.

Question:

In answer E030_05 DEST indicates that over 49% of Indigenous 3-5 years-olds are not attending school or preschool. What are the comparable figures for non-Indigenous children in the same age range?

It is also indicated that 16% of Indigenous children aged 5-16 years are not enrolled in formal education or preschool. What are the corresponding figures for non-Indigenous children?

What policy measures does the Commonwealth have in place to deal with this situation? What measures have been discussed with the states and territories to increase participation of Indigenous children in school and preschool?

What direct funding programs are available from the Commonwealth to provide or subsidise schools and preschools in remote areas and Indigenous settlements? How much was spent on such subsidies in the last year?

Answer:

Indigenous children in preschool

The ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing for Persons indicated that:

- a) of 739,217 non-Indigenous children aged 3,4 and 5 years, 11.2% (82,934) were not attending preschool or a government or non-government infants/primary school; and
- b) of 3,077,258 non-Indigenous children aged between 5 and 16 years (inclusive), 11.7% (360,592) were not attending preschool, primary, secondary or tertiary educational institutions.

The following table includes the numbers of non-Indigenous children aged 5-16 who are not attending formal education.

The Number and Attendance rate of non-Indigenous 3-5 year olds and 5-16 year olds in Education in Australia.

	3 – 5 Year olds	5-16 Year olds
Attending Preschools	240,840	0
Attending Government Primary	291,405	1,196,091
Attending non-Government Primary	124,038	490,995
Attending Government Secondary	0	629,536
Attending non-Government Secondary	0	383,959
Attending technical or further education	0	15,256
Attending university or other tertiary	0	829
Total	656,283	2,716,666
Total Population	739,217	3,077,258
Non - Attendance	82,934	360,592
Non - Attendance as a proportion of population	11.2%	11.7%

ABS 2001 Census Data

The Australian Government is working closely with State and Territory Governments to finalise the Framework for a National Agenda for Early Childhood including the identification of specific priorities where greater collaboration between levels of government is important and needed. Early learning and care is a key action area under the Agenda and the current draft Framework has an emphasis on addressing the access need of Indigenous children.

While pre-school education is the responsibility of State and Territory governments, the Australian Government provides Supplementary Recurrent Assistance under the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP) to provide pre-school opportunities for Indigenous children. The assistance was provided to 5,037 pre-schools in 2002.

The primary source of Australian Government funding for all Australian school students, including Indigenous school students in remote areas, is per capita general recurrent assistance. Funding is also provided under Australian Government mainstream school programmes for a range of targeted purposes, including to improve the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students (which includes Indigenous students and students in remote areas). It is, for example, available to education authorities to utilise funding provided under the Literacy Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Programme, and the Country Areas Programme, on initiatives that will improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous school students in remote areas. It can also be reasonably expected that providers own source mainstream funds will also be applied towards this objective.

In addition to the mainstream funding sources for Indigenous students in remote locations, the Australian Government provides supplementary funding to further accelerate the improvement of Indigenous education outcomes. In 2004, a total of \$51,285,119 was paid to providers from IESIP Supplementary Recurrent Assistance for Indigenous pre-school and school students classified as remote. A total of \$5,615,350 was paid to providers from the English as a Second Language – Indigenous Language Speaking Students (ESL-ILSS) programme, the majority of which is for Indigenous students from remote areas. In addition, ASSPA Committees in remote

schools and pre-schools received \$11,330,000. Some project funding from the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) projects was available to remote preschools and schools, though it is not possible to disaggregate this amount.